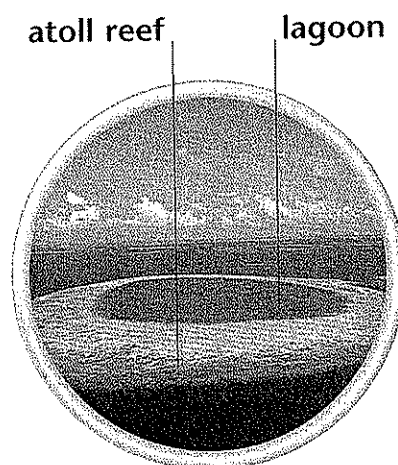


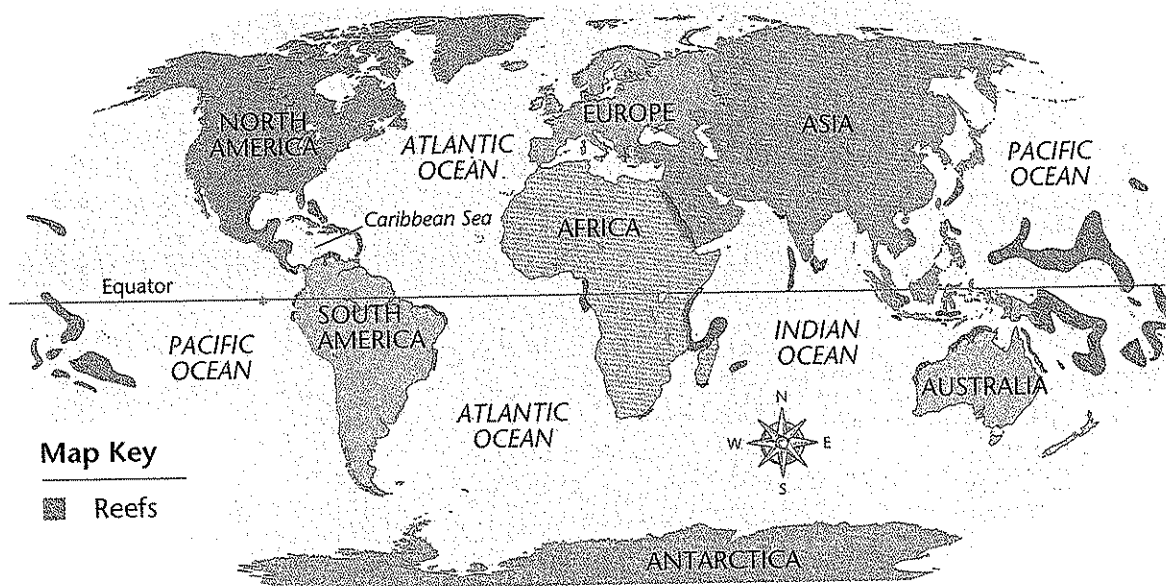
Coral Reefs Around the World

Coral reefs exist in several different parts of the world. Most of them are found in the warm seas that lie near the equator. Polyps need shallow water to grow, so coral reefs are often near land. There are three different type of coral reefs: **atoll reefs**, **fringing reefs**, and **barrier reefs**.



The Maldive Islands in the Indian Ocean are atoll reefs.

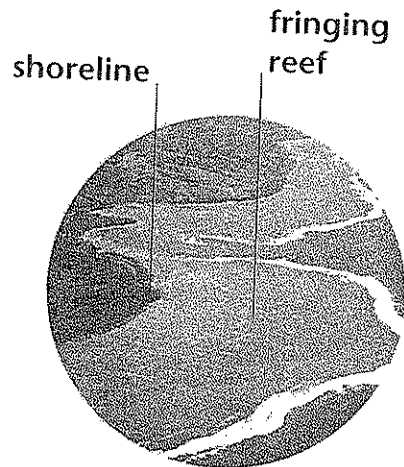
World Reef Map



Most reefs are in the Pacific and Indian Oceans and the Caribbean Sea.

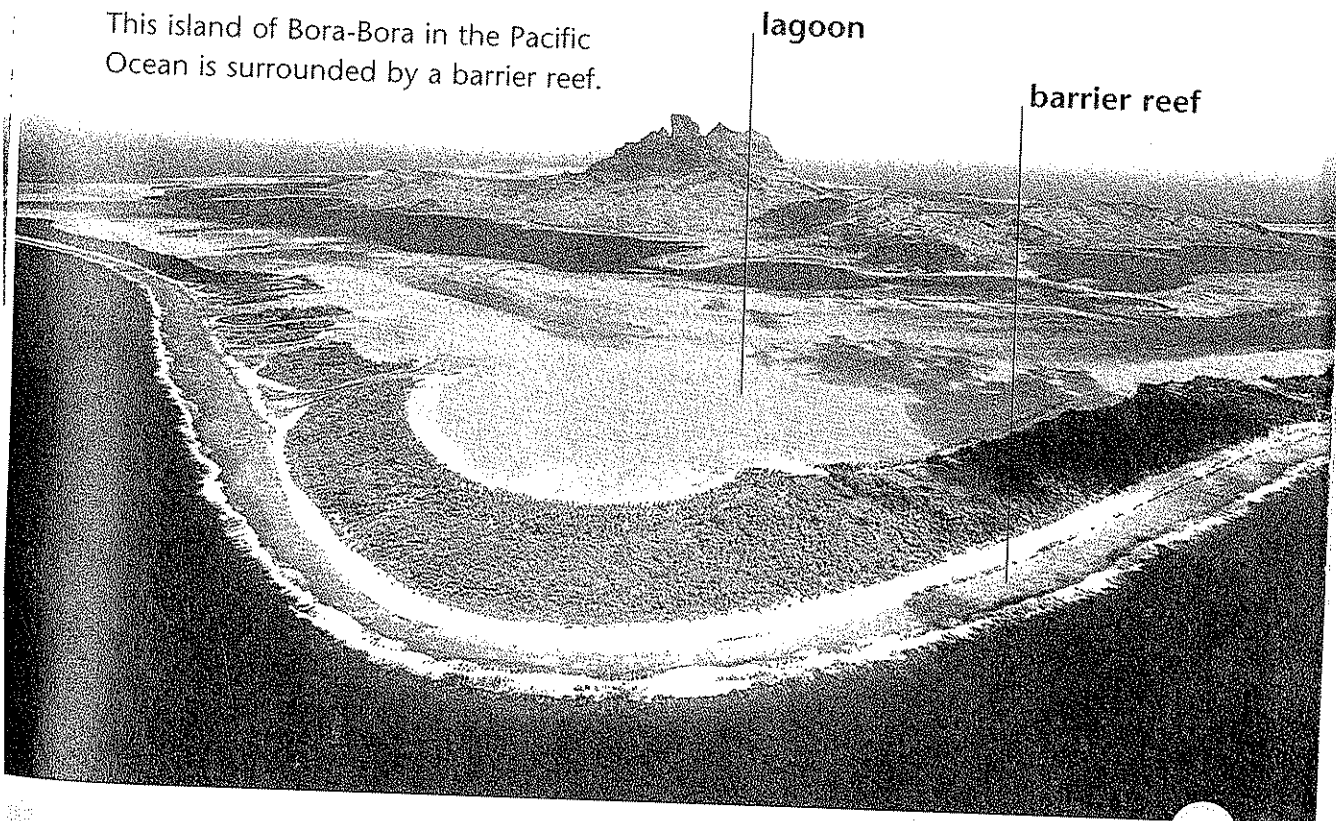
An atoll reef is a ring-shaped reef around a **lagoon**. Unlike other types of reefs, atolls may be far from land. An atoll develops over thousands of years around a volcanic island. Eventually, the volcanic island sinks below the ocean. Later, parts of the atoll may rise above water and become islands themselves.

A fringing reef is right next to the shoreline. A barrier reef also follows the shoreline, but it is separated from the land by a wide lagoon.



This reef in the Pacific Ocean is a fringing reef.

This island of Bora-Bora in the Pacific Ocean is surrounded by a barrier reef.



The Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef in the world. It stretches for 1,260 miles. It is made up of many separate reefs near the northeast coast of Australia. This habitat is home to thousands of species of fish, coral, and other animals.



The Great Barrier Reef

Life Around the Great Barrier Reef

4,000 species of shelled animals (mollusks)



2,000 species of fish



500 species of seaweed



500 species of coral



16 species of sea snakes



6 species of sea turtles

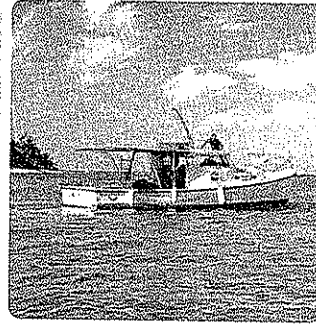


The Great Barrier Reef runs alongside the northeast coast of Queensland, Australia.

Protecting Reefs

Coral reefs have been around for millions of years, but today many reefs are in danger. One threat to these reefs is human activity, especially overfishing. A second threat is the physical damage people do to reefs. Just touching a reef with a hand or foot can kill the coral polyps beneath.

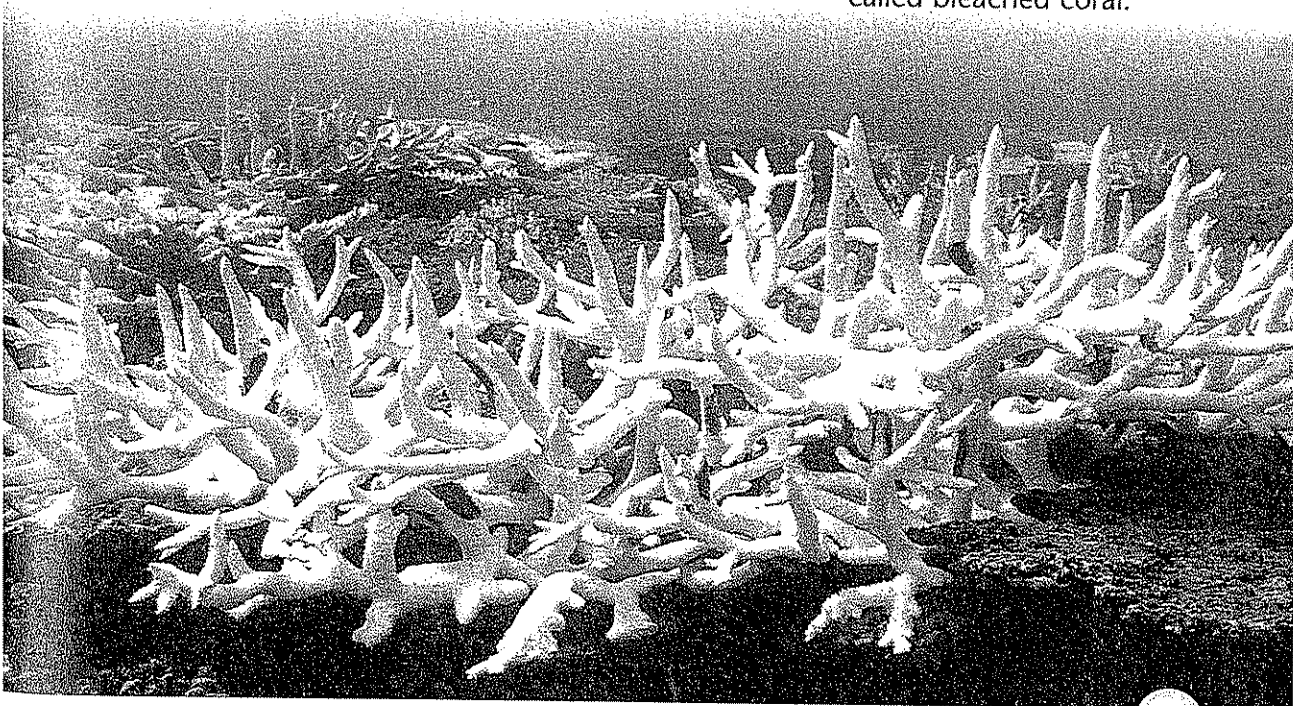
Coral reefs are also threatened by the effects of pollution. Water pollution has harmed or killed many creatures. Global warming has caused some parts of the ocean to become too warm for some reefs to survive.



Caring for Coral

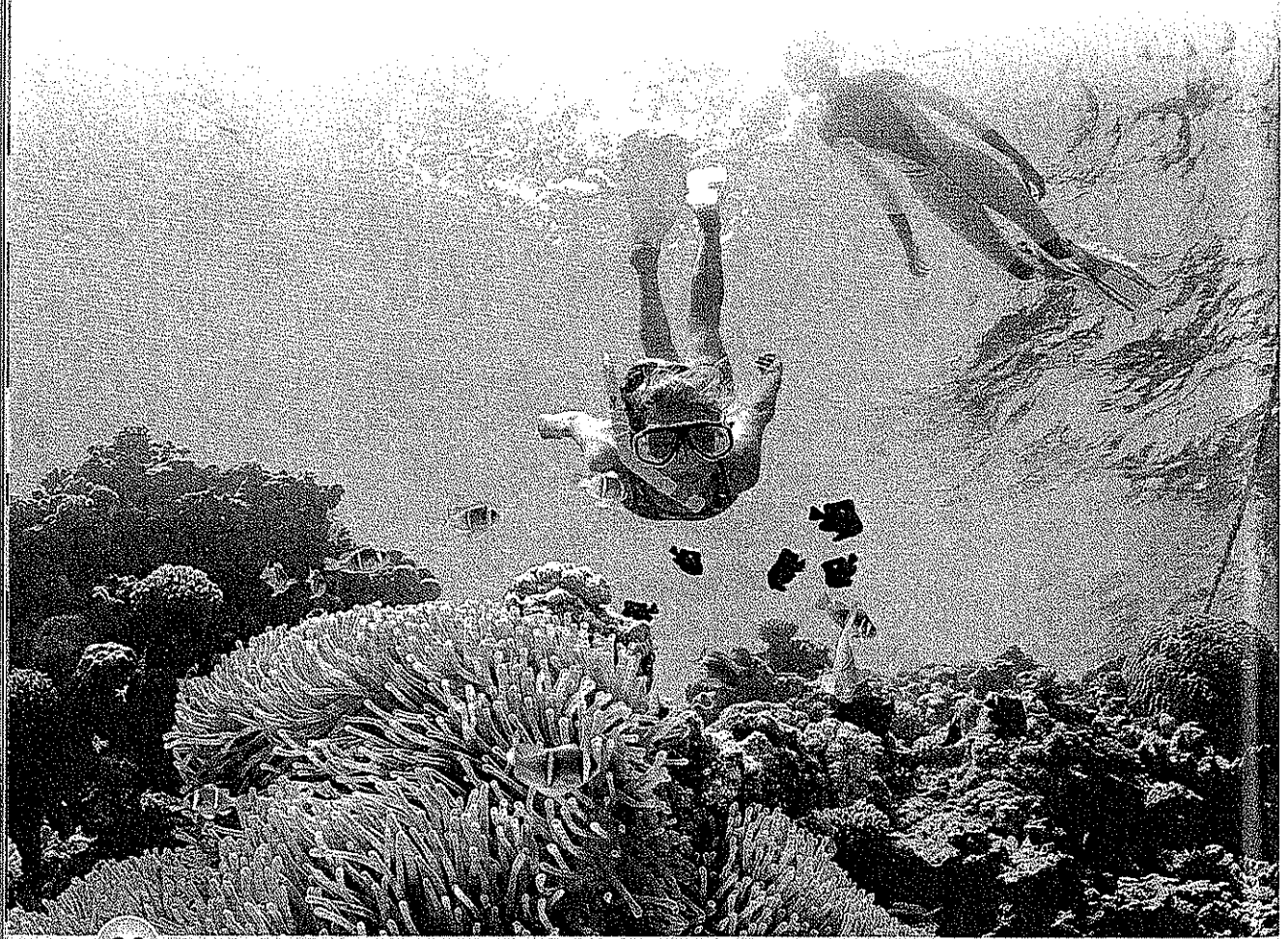
Humans must be careful around coral reefs. Fishing or collecting shells can damage a reef.

Pollution can cause coral to lose its color. This is called bleached coral.



Coral reefs are one of the most important habitats in the world. It's no wonder that people are now working hard to preserve and restore them. Fishermen are protecting the balance of predator and prey by keeping better track of what they catch. Tourists are being careful not to remove animals and shells from the reef.

With help, the reefs can slowly rebuild. These cities under the sea can grow and continue to be lively and healthy homes for thousands of plants and creatures.



Glossary



algae	plantlike creatures that grow in the water and use sunlight to make food
atoll reefs	ring-shaped reefs around a lagoon
barrier reefs	reefs along the shore that are separated from the land by a lagoon
camouflage	a disguise to blend with the surroundings
coral polyps	individual coral animals
coral reefs	platforms or ridges of coral at or near the ocean surface
exoskeleton	a hard outer covering supporting an animal's insides
food chain	the passing of food energy between members of a community of living things
fringing reefs	reefs that form along shorelines
habitats	places where animals and plants live together
lagoon	an area of shallow water separated from the sea
parasites	creatures that benefit by living in or on other creatures, which they harm
plankton	tiny plants and animals floating in the ocean
predators	animals that hunt and kill other animals for food
scavengers	animals that eat dead animals
symbiosis	a partnership that benefits two different kinds of living things
tentacles	long, flexible body parts, such as octopus arms
test	a hard external covering on certain animals, such as sea urchins